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Sunday, 31 January 2021

VP U Myint Swe inspects Hkakaborazi research office, development projects in Nagmon, Kachin State

VICE-PRESIDENT U Myint Swe inspected the Hkakaborazi Biodiversity Research Office (frontline) and development projects in Nagmon Township, Kachin State yesterday.

The Vice-President and party visited Machanbaw Town in the morning after which they left by helicopter from Putao to Nagmon.

During the inspection tour to Machanbaw, the Vice-President was accompanied by Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung, Deputy Ministers Major-General Soe Tint Naing and Dr Ye Myint Swe, Deputy Commander of Northern Command Brig-Gen Aung Myo Oo, Kachin State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Colonel Kyaw Lin Aung, the permanent secretaries, directors-general and responsible officials.

The Vice-President visited the Gubar Yeiktha where he was given a briefing by Putao District Administrator U Thant Zin about the history and conservation works of the Yeiktha and gave instructions on the systematic conservation of the historic Gubar Yeiktha building for long-term sustainability.

Next, he inspected the construction works at the Machanbaw Town Hall, and an official from the Taw Win Myitkyina Co., Ltd. gave a briefing about the project.



Vice-President U Myint Swe inspects the Hkakaborazi Biodiversity Research Office (frontline) in Nagmon Town, Kachin State on 30 January 2021.

PHOTO: MNA

In Nagmon Town, the Vice-President and party visited the Hkakaborazi Biodiversity Research Office (frontline), and the officer-in-charge of the research office U Aung Myat Soe reported on the matters relating to the habitation patterns of birds and wild animals at the Hkakaborazi National Park, research on snow leopards, researches on medicinal plants and biodiversity species at the

Hkakaborazi National Park.

Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Dr Ye Myint Swe and Director-General Dr Nyi Nyi Kyaw also provided necessary inputs as needed.

Union Minister Lt-Gen Ye Aung explained the construction projects of Putao-Nagmon-Pannandin road and Pannandin-Ngawah-Gawine road.

With respect to the reports,

the Vice-President instructed the staff to cooperate with the local ethnic people in a friendly manner to fulfil their assigned duties and conserve the country's rare and beautiful iceberg ecosystem and wild animals and plants which are valuable natural resources.

Later, the Vice-President and party inspected the progress in development works of Nagmon by car.

He donated 200 rice bags for the locals in Pannandin Town, and the town's administrator U Nay Min Tun and locals accepted the rice bags.

The Vice-President and party returned to Putao by helicopter and arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw from Putao by the Tatmadaw's special flight in the evening. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



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“People are the key”

Announcement on Extension of the
Precautionary Restriction Measures Relating
to Control of the COVID-19 Pandemic
until 28 February 2021

- 1. With a view to the further strengthening of measures to contain the spread of the new COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued the following announcements regarding temporary entry restrictions for visitors from all countries. All those restrictions were extended until 31 January 2021 by the Ministry’s announcement dated 30 December 2020.
 - (a) Announcement dated 15 March 2020 regarding precautionary measures for all travellers visiting Myanmar;
 - (b) Announcement dated 20 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers visiting Myanmar and temporary suspension of issuance of visa on Arrival and e-visa;
 - (c) Announcement dated 24 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers from all countries visiting Myanmar;
 - (d) Announcement dated 28 March 2020 regarding temporary suspension of all types of visas (including social visit visas) and visa exemption services.
- 2. In order to continue its effective response measures to protect the population of the country from the risks of importation and spread of the COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has decided to extend the afore-mentioned entry restriction measures until 28 February 2021.
- 3. In case of urgent official missions or compelling reasons, foreign nationals, including diplomats and United Nations officials, who wish to travel to Myanmar by available relief or special flights, may contact the nearest Myanmar Mission for possible exception with regard to certain visa restrictions. However, all visitors must abide by existing directives issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports relating to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 30 January 2021

Effective period for
Temporary Measures to
Prevent Importation of
COVID-19 to Myanmar
through Air Travel extended
till 28 February 2021

The effective period for the Temporary Measures to Prevent Importation of COVID-19 to Myanmar through Air Travel issued on 29 March 2020 by the Ministry of Health and Sports was extended up to 31 January 2021, 23:59 hours of Myanmar Standard Time, in line with the approval of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.

As the infection of this disease remains increasing in most of the countries and more infectious variant of the COVID-19 virus first found in Britain has spread to other countries, including Asian nations, the existing effective period will be further extended with the approval of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19, untill 28 February 2021, 23:59 hours of Myanmar Standard Time.

Ministry of Transport and Communications

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Cash contribution for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made through MoPFI website

- 1. The contribution of cash for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made via the website of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (<http://www.mopfi.gov.mm>) in the following ways.
 - (a) MPU Debit/Credit Card of local banks
 - (b) Visa/Master Credit of local banks
 - (c) Visa/Master Debit & Credit Card of foreign banks
 - (d) Mobile Wallets such as CB-pay, KBZ-pay, OK\$ through QR Code (more mobile wallets will be available)
 - (e) Internet/mobile banking App of KBZ, CB, AYA, UAB and MAB (more internet/mobile banking Apps will be available)
 - (f) Over-the-counter at Supermarkets such as City Mart, Marketplace, Sein Gay Har, Aeon, Orange; mini-marts and convenience stores such as Denko Mini Market, Fun Fun Mart, ABC and Oasis; Mobile Wallet agents such as M-Pitesan, True Money and MyTelPay; Mobile Phone shops such as Any Call, e-City, Lu Gyi Min and My Fone; Wai Yan Electronics Sale Centre; the shops available Near Me logo.
- 2. Therefore, cash contribution can be made at the above-mentioned platforms electronically, in addition to the branches of Myanma Economic Bank and Myanma Agricultural Development Bank and other local private banks.

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Announcement on fund establishment to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

- 1. The National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 30-12-2020 formed a Fund Management Sub-committee on the Purchase of COVID-19 Vaccines. The sub-committee has opened the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund at the Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw as follows:
 - (a) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012). The bank account will be initially deposited with USD250 million, equivalent to about K338 billion from State-funding.
 - (b) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733). The bank account is initially deposited K1 billion (K1,000 million) from State-funding.
- 2. Therefore, organizations and people (local/ foreign countries) who want to contribute cash donation for the purchase of vaccines, can donate any type of foreign currency to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012) at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw), and can donate Myanmar Kyat to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733).
- 3. The potential well-wishers can contact the following phone numbers:
 - Director-General (067 3410156)
 - Treasury Department (067 3410158)

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry



COVID-19 has undergone a genetic mutation

Some of our citizens may have already heard and known about it. We can say that, in many countries, COVID-19 has undergone a genetic mutation that has reached a stage that the disease is spreading more rapidly. The faster the disease spreads, the harder to control it. So now we have to be more careful. A new COVID-19 variant is also being reported in Britain. Some say that the new variant of South Africa is different from the variant of Britain. They say it is also spreading fast. So, we cannot guess what will happen in other countries too.

(Excerpt from Chairperson of National -Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's speech on updated situations of COVID-19 containment measures on 22 January 2021)

VP U Myint Swe inspects Hkakaborazi research office, development projects in Nagmon, Kachin State



Vice-President U Myint Swe provides rice bags for the locals in Pannandin Town, Kachin State on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA (NEWS ON PAGE-1)**



Picture taken on 30 January 2021 shows the Gubar Yeiktha in Machanbaw Township, Kachin State. **PHOTO: MNA (NEWS ON PAGE-1)**

Myanmar citizens abroad brought back home by relief flights



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

A total of 263 Myanmar citizens who were stranded in foreign countries because of the suspension of commercial flights returned home by relief flights yesterday.

The relief flight of Myanmar Airways International organized by Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and Crew Change Supporting Committee-Myanmar repatriating 131 Myanmar seamen from Incheon International Airport in South Korea landed at Yangon International Airport.

Among them, 88 are from the Republic of Korea, 3 from the Philippines, 3 from Malaysia, 5 from the UAE, 8 from Indonesia, 3 from Germany, 1 from Denmark, 1 from Egypt and 1 from France.

The relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines organized by Myanmar Embassy in Singapore bringing 132 Myanmar citizens from Singapore landed

at Yangon International Airport in the evening.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical tests and arranged 14-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working with Myanmar embassies in foreign countries and local ministries concerned to bring back citizens and seamen stranded abroad due to the suspension of international commercial flights, in accordance with the guidance of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Hluttaw MPs vaccinated to attend first regular session of third Hluttaw



Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung receives the COVID-19 vaccine in Nay Pyi Taw on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: KO GYI HTEIN (MNA)**

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and members of the Hluttaw who will attend the first regular session of the third Hluttaw were Covishield vaccinated by the health workers yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. A total of 110 Tatmadaw Pyithu Hluttaw members and 56 Tatmadaw



Amyotha Hluttaw MPs receive the vaccination against COVID-19 in Nay Pyi Taw on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: KO GYI HTEIN (MNA)**

Amyotha Hluttaw members and Amyotha Hluttaw members were vaccinated and they will receive a second dose of the vaccine 28 days after the first dose.—Myo Min Naing

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Federation of Myanmar Engineering Societies holds annual meeting online

FEDERATION of Myanmar Engineering Societies held annual meeting virtually yesterday.

Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing, Patron of the federation sent his video message to the meeting.

The Union Minister said the federation was established in December 1995 and it reached its Silver Jubilee in 2020 with a large number of members.

He then discussed the co-operation work of the federation with Myanmar Engineering Council and enactment of Myanmar Engineering Council Law in 2013 by aiming to develop the ethics of Myanmar engineers as well as technology and to support the state's development.

He highlighted the crucial role of engineers for infrastructural development in developing countries, significant develop-



Union Minister U Win Khaing participates in the Annual Meeting of Federation of Myanmar Engineering Societies via videoconferencing on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

ment, especially in the transport sector; electrification and rural development programmes under the new government term since it took power in 2016.

He also talked about the importance of infrastructure to lure the local and foreign investors, engineering subjects to produce qualified engineers, learned persons and skilled labours, cooperation work with Myanmar Engineering Council, paper-reading session for engineering subjects, negotiations and meeting conducted by the government, NGO, ASEAN region association, ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organizations and Federation of Engineering Institutions of Asia and the Pacific.

The ceremony to select new executive members for 2021-2022 was conducted after the annual meeting.

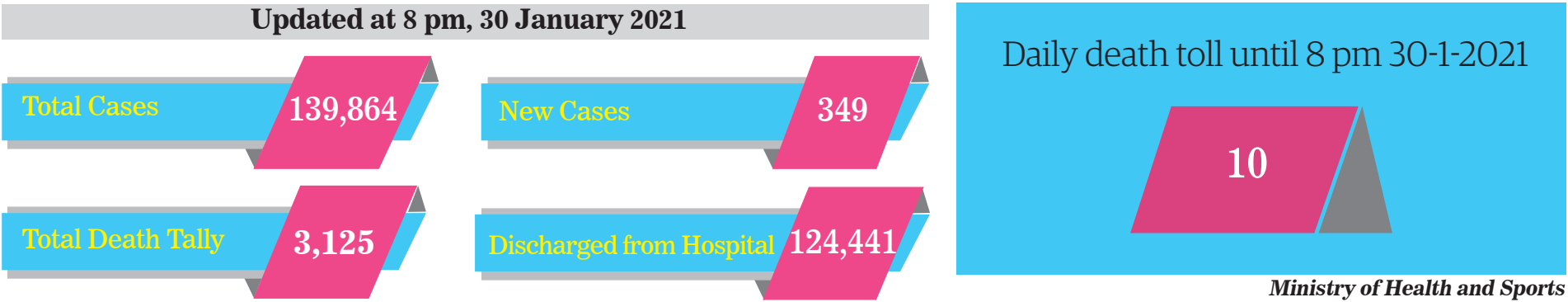
He also urged the participants to select the new executive members who are willing to serve for the development of the federation and engineering field with innovative ideas to keep abreast of international countries.

He then made suggestions for those elected as new members that they should carry out the policies of country and objectives of the federation in unity to develop the infrastructure and engineering subjects.

The ceremony was attended by Patrons, Chairmen and members of Myanmar Engineering Council and Federation of Myanmar Engineering Societies.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

349 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 30 January, total figure rises to 139,864

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 139,864 after 349 new cases were reported on 30 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 139,864 confirmed cases, 3,125 died, 124,441 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA



MoC Union Minister sends video message to World Pulses Day 2021 Celebration, 1st Annual Meeting of MDEA

UNION MINISTER for Commerce Dr Than Myint sent his video message to the ceremony of World Pulses Day 2021 and 1st annual meeting of Myanmar Digital Economy Association yesterday.

In his video message, Union Minister discussed the beans and pulses export, potential for beans and pulses and efforts of the ministry in improving that sector.

The Union Minister also said the farming sector plays a key role for the economy, trade and job opportunities of the nation for being an agricultural country. There are 65 per cent of beans and pulses export via sea route and 35 per cent via land border.

According to the data of 2019, Myanmar exported beans and pulses to 60 countries. The most



Union Minister Dr Than Myint delivers video message to the ceremony of World Pulses Day 2021 and 1st annual meeting of Myanmar Digital Economy Association on 30 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

export volume goes to India, China, Singapore, Pakistan, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, the UAE, Malaysia and Japan.

During COVID-19 outbreak, although some export sector saw a sharp decline, the agricultural

export volume was higher than before.

He also highlighted the plan to prioritize the beans and pulses sector in National Export Strategy (NES), domestic production of quality beans and pulses, low

expenses, higher export volume, increased local beans consumption and production of value-added products.

He then stressed the need to prioritize the interest of bean farmers as well as the business people.

The Union Minister also appreciated the cooperation work between Myanmar Digital Economy Association in implementing the Digital Economy Innovation Advocacy Project, which is a part of EIF Tier-2 project.

He also discussed the momentum of the digital economy that benefits various socio-economy sectors including e-Commerce, Online Learning, Telemedicine, Online job hunting, Online concert and Sharing economy.

The ministry distributed Good Practice Guide for the businesses to switch from offline to online amid COVID-19 pandemic. It also provided technical aids to SMEs to penetrate the global market via a digital platform, suggestions to draft e-Commerce Guidelines to develop Application and work plans to go online registration for e-commerce.

The Union Minister then stressed the need to make efforts to adopt IT technology in e-commerce, youths and MSMEs.

He also discussed the arrangements to draft e-commerce law by cooperating with the Ministry of Transport and Communications and Trade Net 2.0 system to offer better public services.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

MoSWRR discusses implementation of national strategic plan for youth policy (2020-2024)

UNION MINISTER for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye held an online coordination meeting for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Youth Policy (2020-2024) on 29 January.

At the meeting, the Union Minister said the policies and strategies for the development of youths are systematically formulated and implemented since the development of the youth sector is important for the country's future development.

The Myanmar Youth Policy was formulated in 2016 and approved in 2017. The National Strategic Plan for Youth Policy (2020-2024) was released in December 2020. The Government formed Youth Affairs Committees in Nay Pyi Taw Council, respective states and regions and coordinated with relevant governments, NGOs and INGOs

and allocated funds in the last five years in order to implement the Strategic Plan.

He continued a total of 16 sectors related to the youth development will be carried out as implementation of the Strategic Plan. The sectors include Education, Health, Drugs and other hazards, Sports and Recreation, Job opportunities, Business, Politics, Literature, Art and Culture, Research, Science and Technology, civics and Good Citizenship, Resource Use and Environmental Protection, Peace and Security, Gender Equality and Human Rights.

Regarding the education sector which is an important sector for youth, he said the Ministry of Education is formulating the National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030) and will include opportunities for youth participation and will be



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye holds meeting on the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Youth Policy 2020-2024 on 29 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

implemented effectively.

He added the need to continue implementing the projects included in the Strategic Plan in accordance with the COVID-19 regulations without waiting until the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination. He also added the

importance of the strength of the youth in establishing a truly democratic nation and the patriotism of all ethnic nationalities in implementing the youth development activities.

He said to cooperate with relevant Nay Pyi Taw Council

and states/regions governments in implementing the National Strategic Plan (2020-2024) with the lead of the Myanmar Youth Affairs Committee.

The meeting also discussed the activities of the six priority sectors to be carried out in the first six months of the 2020-2021 F.Y, the formation of necessary district and township youth committees, obtaining land for youth centres, working closely with departments and access to funding for youth affairs committees.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Minister, the Permanent Secretary, Director-General, officials from the Ministry, Social Welfare officers from Nay Pyi Taw Council and respective regions and states and youth representatives from the Youth Affairs Committee.—MNA (Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Picture shows the newly-opened coastal fisheries project office in Pyinphyumaw Village in Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State. PHOTO: TIN TUN OO

Sustainable coastal fisheries project building opened in Kyaukpyu

THE Department of Fisheries inaugurated the sustainable coastal fisheries project office building in Pyinphyumaw Village in Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State yesterday morning. The office building was built with the collaboration of Denmark for the fishers in coastal regions.

The people of Pyinphyumaw Village in Kyaukpyu Township are mainly engaged in marine fisheries. By constructing the facility, local fishers will be provided with vocational training by the Department of

Fisheries during the non-fishing season. At the facility, they will be offered mushroom cultivation training, sewing and home-based handicrafts such as wiring training.

At present, there are only three fisheries project office buildings in Rakhine State, two in Sittway and one office in Kyaukpyu, according to the District Fisheries Department.—Tin Tun Oo, Phyo Wai Lin (IPRD)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

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Naungtayar potato association imports 25 tonnes of Mar potato species



Farmers harvest potatoes at a farm in Naungtayar, Pinlaung Township, southern Shan State.
PHOTO: KHON AUNG (NAUNG TAYAR)

NAUNG TAYAR potato association imported 25 tonnes of Mar potato species which is suited to the region.
The Naungtayar potato association was formed by the potato growers from Naungtayar

town, Pinlaung township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South).
“This year, the Naungtayar potato association imported 25 tonnes of Mar potato species from abroad. Last year, they

bought from other companies. In 2015-2016 financial year, the association got tax exemption, and it cost only K1,700 to reach Naungtayar. The association has to pay 15 per cent tax, and it costs K2,500 to reach Naungta-

yar. We will grow new species of potato. Then, we will distribute to the local farmers by keeping produced potato in the refrigerator,” said Chairman U Khun San Oo of the Naungtayar potato association.
The association imported the new Mar species aimed for the local farmers to grow the potato at a lower cost, to get the good species of potato which is also suited to the weather condition, to yield higher, to produce good delicious potato and to ensure good quality of potato for the fried potato businesses, he added. Naungtayar potato association is constructing a potato cold storage building and is targeted to complete in March. Upon completing the construction project, there will be a good advantage as the good quality potato can be exported. The potato could be stored longer. We will reduce the import of potato, and the local farmers could grow the potato at an affordable cost. —Khon Aung (Naungtayar) (Translated by Hay Mar)

MNA to give discount gift vouchers to YGN-MDY passengers

WITH the resumption of domestic flights by Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) for the people’s convenience in the pandemic period, MNA will give 25-per cent discount gift vouchers to Yangon and Mandalay flight passengers on 3 February, according to the MNA statement.
MNA will offer a 25-per cent discount voucher on 3 February at Yangon and Mandalay check-in counters with limitations by the first-come-first-served system.
“On 3 February, our MNA



Picture shows an airplane of Myanmar National Airlines flying above the clouds. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG**
will provide the gift vouchers to the passengers who will board the plane from Yangon airport and Mandalay airport.

The gift vouchers are limited. If the passengers flying with MNA buy the air ticket, showing the gift voucher will receive a 25-per cent discount,” said an official from MNA.
This discount voucher will be available only for Yangon and Mandalay travellers. MNA has recently resumed its domestic flights. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, MNA was flying to around 29 towns. Now, MNA is flying its flights depending upon the number of passengers. —Myint Maung (Translated by Hay Mar)

Forest Dept instructs businessmen to replant bamboo after production

THE Forest Department has instructed the businessmen who produce the bamboo, applying for the plantation to replant two acres of bamboo plantation for every 100,000 bamboo production, said U Htay Maung, the director of the Forest Department in Magway Region.
The instruction aims to prevent the destruction and conservation of bamboo species.

One hundred sixty-seven business people grow and produce the bamboo in 166 forest reserves in 25 townships of Magway Region. In 2020, the businessmen made 14,580,000 bamboos from their bamboo plantations. That is the reason why they are instructed to replant about 300 acres of bamboo plantation.
“The department provides

guidance to prevent the devastation of bamboo species and provide all possible support. The township officials are also giving awareness campaigns for people interested in the cultivation of the bamboo to participate in environmental conservation,” U Htay Maung clarified.
The department also planted about 890,000 species seeds

to distribute nursery plants to the people free of charge. The bamboo can be produced after three years of cultivation. So, the department gives the green light once every three years after scrutinizing. In 2021, more than 14 million bamboos are targeted to produce, according to the Forest Department. —Zayyatu (Magway) (Translated by Hay Mar)

INFECTION RATE FALLING

Better behaviour, fledgling population immunity behind US case decline



US President Joe Biden visits a Covid-19 vaccine site at Walter Reed National Military Medical Centre in Bethesda, Maryland, on January 29, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

THE trend line is now unmistakable: the US Covid outbreak is easing, with new cases and hospitalizations down two weeks in a row, even though the overall numbers still remain far higher than prior to the fall-winter surge.

What's behind the slide? Experts say there are many reasons, from a better adherence to masking and distancing measures, to the fact that the holiday period is now well behind us. Another factor, at least in some areas of the country, is that the virus has already burned through much of the population and is running out of targets -- but easing restric-

tions too fast could still upset the current equilibrium and trigger a new spike, scientists warn.

Here's what you need to know.

Holiday super-surge over

After a summer lull, the US infection rate began to pick up again last fall, when gatherings began to move indoors and people started letting their guards down. Then came the holiday season: Thanksgiving, Christmas, then New Year's: a coronavirus triple-threat that sent cases soaring as millions of Americans ignored official guidance and visited their

families and friends.

The US was clocking a daily case average of more than 250,000 by the second week of January, and more than 130,000 hospitalizations, according to data from the Covid Tracking Project.

There are still more than 3,000 deaths on average per day, because of the lag time, but overall the metrics are heading in the right direction.

"That holiday travel which the virus was exploiting has kind of dissipated," Amesh Adalja of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security told AFP.

SOURCE: AFP

RISKY GAMBLE?

Italy 'bucks trend' by easing Covid rules

ITALY on Friday opted to ease coronavirus restrictions in most of its regions, despite warnings from public health experts that such a move may be rash.

A source in the health ministry said all but five of Italy's regions would now be considered "yellow", according to a colour-coded system of yellow, orange and red that indicates coronavirus risk. A "yellow" zone allows for the daytime reopening of bars and restaurants and greater freedom to travel.

Italy's islands of Sicily and

Sardinia, as well as its regions of Umbria, Puglia and the autonomous province of South Tyrol will be considered "orange", the source said. The changes come as other countries in Europe are mulling hardening restrictions.

The World Health Organization's European branch warned on Thursday that it was "too early to ease up" due to a "still very high" presence of the virus.

"Yes, Italy is bucking the trend," said Walter Ricciardi, a public health expert who advises Italy's health minister on the

pandemic. He told AFP lockdown measures adopted in Italy over Christmas and New Year helped stabilise virus numbers, without lowering them. Nevertheless, "right now it is extremely difficult to propose stricter measures due to resistance from both politicians and public opinion", Ricciardi said. France meanwhile is looking at a possible third lockdown, with President Emmanuel Macron expected to make an announcement on new measures over the weekend or on Monday.

SOURCE: AFP

7 PER CENT DECLINE

Number of TV series in US declined in 2020 for first time: analysts

THE number of television series that broadcast or streamed new episodes in the United States in 2020 was down on the previous year for the first time since the tally began, analysts said Friday.

Last year, some 493 episodic fiction programmes were offered on traditional television or online platforms, a decline of seven per cent in a year, said FX Research, a subsidiary of the Disney group.

But 2019 was a record high at 532 programmes, or two and a half times the offer available only ten years earlier.

With the arrival of new platforms such as Disney+, Apple TV+, HBO Max and Peacock between November 2019 and July 2020, a swarm of new series has invaded the small screens in recent months. But the coronavirus pandemic has paralyzed



In this file photo taken on April 15, 2020, the closed Paramount Studio is seen amid the coronavirus pandemic in Los Angeles, California. PHOTO: AFP/ VALERIE MACON

Hollywood intermittently since early 2020, disrupting filming ever since. FX Research does not provide any analysis on the downturn, the first since the group began publishing these figures annually in 2009; nor does it give details of distribution channels.

In recent years, the figures showed that while the number of series offered by online platforms has exploded, those broadcast on American cable were less numerous, as were those broadcast on the major national channels.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Serum Institute of India to launch another COVID-19 vaccine by June

India's vaccine maker Serum Institute of India (SII) on Saturday said it was hopeful of launching another COVID-19 vaccine Covovax by June this year.

The vaccine is being developed in partnership with U.S. vaccine developer Novavax, whose COVID-19 shot media reports said was found to be 89.3 per cent effective in the trial in Britain.

"Our partnership for a COVID-19 vaccine with Novavax has also published excellent efficacy results. We have also applied to start trials in India. Hope to launch Covovax by June 2021!" SII chief Adar Poonawalla wrote on the social media platform Twitter.

On Jan. 16 India began its inoculation drive after its drug regulator Drugs Controller-General of India (DCGI) cleared two vaccines -- the SII's Covishield and Indian pharma firm Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Covishield has been developed in partnership with the Oxford University and the British-Swedish drug maker AstraZeneca, while Covaxin was developed by Bharat Biotech in partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Last month Poonawalla said India would purchase between 300 million and 400 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from the SII.

SOURCE: Xinhua

Malaysia reports 5,728 new COVID-19 cases in highest daily spike

Malaysia reported 5,728 new COVID-19 infections in the highest daily spike since the outbreak, bringing the national total to 209,661, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

Health Ministry Director-General Noor Hisham Abdullah said in a press statement that five of the new cases were imported and 5,723 were local transmissions.

Another 13 deaths were

reported, pushing the total deaths to 746.

Some 3,805 more patients have been released after recovery, bringing the total cured and discharged to 161,527, or 77 per cent of all cases.

Of the remaining 47,388 active cases, 319 are being held in intensive care unit and 120 of those are in need of assisted breathing.

SOURCE: Xinhua

Tourism revival is of paramount importance

IT was reported in one of the world's news items the other day that the coronavirus crisis cost the global tourism sector US\$1.3 trillion in lost revenue in 2020. The reason was that the number of travellers both internationally and domestically plunged so much so that we can call the year 2020 "the worst year in tourism history", according to the UN. Furthermore, the Madrid-based World Tourism Organization (WTO) also warned that between 100 million and 120 million direct tourism jobs were at risk.

The impacts of the COVID pandemic on the Myanmar tourism industry and its related sectors are inescapable, too. So, the National Tourism Development Central Committee held its first meeting for the year 2021 on 8 January 2021 for the tourism recovery and revival measures to be implemented in Myanmar in the post-COVID-19 era. It is heartening to know that plans are underway to carry out cross-border tourism arrangements and expansions with ASEAN member countries and Asian countries.

According to the World Tourism Organization guidelines and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, the national committee has also developed and launched the Myanmar Tourism Strategic Recovery Roadmap-MTSRR (2021-2025). This time the roadmap will focus on promoting natural tourism, ethnic tourism, and environmental tourism while heeding the COVID preventative health protocols. It is also encouraging to know that the MTSRR roadmap, which includes short, mid, and long-term strategic objectives, shall be implemented in tandem with the Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan (MERRP) during the COVID-19 and post-COVID periods.

We see another salient point in the tourism recovery and revival measures that the "Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocols" have already been adopted for Myanmar to achieve the Safe Tourism Award from the World Tourism Council. There are many challenges towards obtaining the certification.

tification.

"I wish to urge all concerned to cooperate with the relevant departments so that a durable system is established; something that rises quickly and withers away, is not what we want," stressed the State Counsellor in her video message to the National Tourism Development Central Committee meeting 1/2021.

We need to promote safe tourism. We need to develop community-based and people-oriented tourism. We need to showcase our traditional cultures, cultures of our ethnic nationals as well as the daily social lifestyle of our people. We urge all stakeholders to join hands and collaborate in unity to revive the Myanmar tourism sector.

On Expanding the United States Supreme Court

By Dr Myint Zan

WITH the swearing-in of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States and the Democrats having a bare majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate a few people are enthusiastic and hopeful as the executive and legislative branch of the United States government, for the first time since 2015, is 'controlled' by the Democrats. To add a spanner to the works (so to speak) it can be stated that perhaps in a sense the most powerful institution among the three branches of government the United States Supreme Court is and would continue to be in Republican hands.

The news item stated that Judge Merrick Garland which former President Barack Obama appointed to replace the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in March 2016 eight months before the 2016 US presidential election is nominated by President Biden as Attorney-General in the new administration.

When President Obama nominated Judge Garland to replace Justice Antonin Scalia eight months before the 2016 election, the Republicans who held a majority in the Senate and Senate judiciary committee cussedly refused to give a hearing to Judge Garland with the reason that just eight months before the 2016 election the next President should nominate the Supreme Court Justice.

Yet these same Republican Senators, outrageously rushed and approved the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett (born 28 January 1972) as a Supreme Court Justice literally a week before the 3 November 2020 US election.

In this writer's view for Judge Merrick Garland, the post of Attorney-General would be if not 'cold comfort' then sort of 'consolation prize' since a Supreme Court Justice under the United States constitution has life-tenure and plays, in quite a few senses, a more powerful role than the Attorney-General.

Former President Trump was able to appoint 3 Justices in his single term of 4 years (compare that with former President Jimmy Carter who was unable to appoint a single Justice in 4 years as President and President Barack Obama who after eight years appointed only two Justices).

During his campaign, candidate Joe Biden stated that if elected President he would form a 'bipartisan' Commission to look into the issue (if need be) of 'expanding the Supreme Court'. Since the year 1869, the membership of the super elitist US Supreme Court is restricted to 9 Justices.

In November 1936 President Frank-

lin Roosevelt won a landslide victory in the US Presidential elections as well as Democratic Senate and Democratic House of Representatives. In February 1937 Roosevelt tried to (supposedly) 'pack the court'. He proposed a 'plan' that if a Supreme Court Justice did not retire when he (the Supreme Court Justices were all males from 1791 to 1981) reached the age of 70 years and six months, then the President can appoint an additional Justice. Notwithstanding President Roosevelt's majority with Democratic control then of both the House of Representatives and the Senate Roosevelt's plan failed.

Now 84 years later President Biden has (albeit barely) a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate (50 Democrats and 50 Republicans with Vice President Kamala Harris as President of the Senate having the 'tie-breaker' casting a vote). What proved to be impossible to expand the Supreme Court in 1937 may also be very difficult in 2021. (Perhaps the yet-to-be-formed bi-partisan commission may not wholly concentrate on 'expanding' the Supreme Court).

Brief comparison with the United Kingdom Supreme Court

Let's have a brief contextual comparison with other countries' apex courts. The current population of the United States is around 328 million. Its apex court has 9 members.

The current population of the United Kingdom is about 66 million. The United Kingdom Supreme Court has 12 members. UK Supreme Court Justices appointed before March 1995 have to compulsorily retire at the age of 75 and Justices who were appointed after March 1995 have to retire on reaching the age of 70.

Brief comparison with the Australian High Court

Australia has a population of about 25 million. The apex court in Australia is called the High Court of Australia, which has seven Justices. From Federation in 1901 to the adoption of the constitutional amendment in 1977, the Commonwealth of Australia like the United States of America since 1791 to now the apex court judges have life-tenure.

One Australian High Court Judge Sir Edward McKiernan (18 February 1892-9 January 1990) served in the High Court for nearly 45 years and 9 months (from 20 December 1930 to 12 September 1976). A bipartisan constitutional amendment Bill in the Australian Parliament which made it compulsory for all High Court judges (appointed after the amendment came

into force) was resoundingly passed in a nation-wide referendum in 1977.

Suffice to state that due to the even more complicated and extremely difficult process of amending the US Constitution a (US) constitutional amendment mandating a 'compulsory retirement age' for United States Supreme Court Justices is well-nigh impossible.

The writer has given 'examples' from the apex courts of what can be considered from countries which have (like the United States) 'inherited' British legal heritage: the 'mother country' of the United Kingdom and Australia.

Brief contextual comparison with the Supreme Court of India

Now, briefly to India with a population about 1366 million. Its Supreme Court has 34 Judges, and their compulsory retirement age is fixed at 65. Of course, not all 34 Judges sit to hear cases. A minimum of 3 Indian Supreme Court judges would hear a case. In 1973, a Bench of 13 Judges heard a particularly significant case.

Brief comparison with Myanmar Union Supreme Court

Under the 2008 Myanmar Constitution, the Supreme Court must be formed with a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 11 Judges. As of December 2020, there are 9 Judges in the current Myanmar Supreme Court. The retirement age for Myanmar Supreme Court judges (like those of the Australia High Court and UK Supreme Court) is 70. The 2008 Constitution also has a stipulation that a Judge appointed to it (must age-wise) be at least 50 years old.

'Foreign Fads and Fashions'

The late Justice Antonin Scalia had stated in one of his rulings that the United States Supreme Court would not, should not pay heed to 'foreign legal fashions and trends'. On the other hand, Justice Stephen Bryer (born 15 August 1938) has indicated a less hostile or indeed more accommodating attitude towards 'foreign legal fashions or trends' (of course not necessarily to 'follow' or to emulate) but at least to take note of them. The above country comparisons are made in that 'spirit' and context.

Retirement of Justice Bryer and new Justice Obama?

Talking about Justice Bryer, he is at 82, the oldest Supreme Court Justice in the current Court. Justice Bryer is 33 years older than recently appointed Justice Barrett.

This writer has read to the effect



Justice Edward McTiernan of Australian High Court

that President Barack Obama after his re-election in 2012 gently hinted to the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg perhaps to retire while the United States Senate was (till around October 2014 before that year US mid-term elections) in the Democrats' control so that her replacement can be approved by the US Senate.

Even if this rumour is untrue IF Justice Ginsburg had resigned or retired say in early to mid-2014 then perhaps Justice Ginsburg's position would have been filled by a moderate Justice if not as liberal as her then at least not as radical right-wing as the Trump's appointees are. But that was the past, and that is 'iffy history'.

For the future, I would like to (dare I say it!) respectfully 'submit' that Justice Bryer should opt to retire while the Senate is still in control of the Democrats. IF (to repeat) that scenario was to occur who should President Biden nominate for the Supreme Court?

The 'murmurs' circulating in some circles is that former President Barack Obama should or even could be nominated by President Biden. At the age of 59, Obama has sterling legal credentials in addition to his solid political experience. Obama is about the same age as Ruth Bader Ginsburg when President Bill Clinton nominated her to the Supreme Court in 1993. Justice Barrett is only 49 and (again should a Supreme Court vacancy occurs) ideally it is preferable that a youngish ('fortyish') female (or for that matter a male as a second preference) candidate (not necessarily a Judge since Senators and academics among others have been appointed to the Supreme Court) with moderate to liberal views would be the best candidate for President Biden to consider.

With the Senate now under Democratic control (under the extreme cir-

cumstances if need be) with the casting vote of Senate President Kamala Harris a Biden nomination of a jurist with moderate to liberal views can be appointed to the Supreme Court.

Best wishes to President Biden in not 'flinching from the tasks'

Back to the bipartisan commission (regarding Supreme Court) which candidate Biden, during his campaign, has stated that he will establish. The President has a lot on his plate, so to speak, but I trust that he would take that step towards reform. Though the past history of President Roosevelt's failed attempt in 1937 should not be a controlling factor; it nevertheless is true that reforming or expanding the Supreme Court would be a very difficult task.

Biden, a devout Catholic, has quoted a few Biblical passages in his inauguration speech. A quote not from the Bible from the Jewish tradition states (in somewhat classical English translation) 'It is not for thee to complete the task, but neither art thou entitled to flinch from it'.

With quiet dedication, determination and a spirit of optimism, President Biden has embarked on the task of undoing -let's face it- the damage done in the past four years. In initiating and implementing necessary and meaningful reforms, I hope and believe that a significant plurality of Americans and quite a few non-Americans the world over wish him all the best.

'Comparative Law' as an optional subject or elective is offered in some Law Departments among the 23 Law Departments spread throughout Myanmar. This article should be of some interest and relevance to teachers and students of the Comparative Law course.

Dr Myint Zan, a retired Professor of Law, has established two prizes relating to law in two of his alma maters. The 'Myint Zan LLM prize' is to be awarded to those who graduate from the University of Michigan Law School (in the United States) in the Master of Laws (LLM) programme who have shown 'interdisciplinary interests and commitment to social justice'. Since 2018 three LLM graduates from New Zealand, Ghana and Indonesia were awarded the Myint Zan LLM prize.

He has also established the 'Myint Zan Prize in Law Studies' at another of his alma mater The Australian National University (ANU). In 2019 an undergraduate LLB (Bachelor of Laws) student who took the subject 'law, literature and human rights' at the Faculty of Law at ANU was awarded the Myint Zan Prize in Law Studies.

Union Day Objectives 74th Anniversary of Union Day - 2021

1. To work on the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved.
2. Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic nationals.
3. To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
4. All ethnic nationals to work for the preservation and protection of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty.
5. To nurture and develop new generations endowed with high skills and capabilities imbued with strong Union spirit.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 30th January, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 31 January, 2021: Weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Northern Shan, Chin, Rakhine States. Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of decrease of night temperatures in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 January, 2021: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 January, 2021: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR Mandalay and NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 January, 2021: Partly cloudy.

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JINYINTAN HOSPITAL

WHO team visits Wuhan hospital that received first COVID-19 patients

Members of the WHO team leave Jinyintan Hospital. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE team of World Health Organization experts investigating the origins of the coronavirus met staff Saturday at the Wuhan hospital which received the first

confirmed COVID-19 cases, on day two of fieldwork on their highly scrutinised visit to China.

The group was driven to the Jinyintan Hospital, the first

hospital to receive officially-diagnosed COVID-19 patients in late 2019, as the horrors of the virus emerged in the central Chinese city.

Details of the trip have been scant so far, with the media kept at arm's length and information on the itinerary dribbling out via tweets from the WHO experts instead of China's communist authorities.

In a tweet, team member Peter Daszak welcomed the hospital visit as an "Important opportunity to talk directly w/ medics who were on the ground at that critical time fighting COVID!"

On Friday, the WHO's emergency director Micheal Ryan

sought to manage expectations.

Success "is not measured necessarily in absolutely finding a source on the first mission", he told a news conference in Geneva.

The team is expected to visit the Huanan market believed to have been the first major cluster of infections, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and other labs, in what the WHO's Ryan described as a "very busy, busy schedule".

The Chinese economy grew by 2.3 per cent despite the outbreak last year and its leadership misses few chances to boast of the country's resilience and renewal.

SOURCE: AFP

JUST SIX MONTHS BEFORE OLYMPICS

International badminton competition in Japan cancelled over virus

AN international badminton competition due to take place this spring in Japan has been cancelled, organizers said Saturday, the latest sporting event to be hit by virus travel restrictions just six months before the Tokyo Olympics.

The Yonex Osaka International Challenge for young players was called off "because it is difficult to host foreign players" under current immigration rules, the Nippon Badminton Association said. Large parts of Japan including Tokyo and the western city of Osaka are under a state of emergency to tackle a spike in coronavirus cases, with borders closed to almost all foreigners

with no exception for athletes.

The first Tokyo Olympics test event of 2021, an artistic swimming competition scheduled for March, was postponed on Thursday for two months -- also because of travel restrictions. The Tokyo Olympics -- initially set to take place last year but postponed due to the virus -- are set to start on July 23.

Despite growing concern over the event's feasibility, organizers and the IOC insist it can be held safely.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga vowed Friday that the Olympics would be held this summer "as a symbol of global unity" to "bring hope and



Large parts of Japan including Tokyo and the western city of Osaka are under a state of emergency to tackle a spike in coronavirus cases. **PHOTO: JIJI PRESS/AFP/FILE**

courage to the world". The state of emergency, which requests restaurants and bars close early,

will remain in place in affected areas until at least February 7.

SOURCE: AFP

CANCEL CULTURE

Coachella festival scrapped again amid virus fears

ORGANIZERS of the world-famous Coachella music festival, due to be held in April, have been forced to cancel the event because of coronavirus concerns, the second year in a row it has been shut down.

Cameron Kaiser, a public health officer for California's Riverside County, where the massive gathering is held, said Friday the order to cancel was based on concerns of "resurgence of Covid-19 both within the county of Riverside and worldwide."

He said the Coachella and Stagecoach music and arts fes-

tivals, both scheduled to take place in April, attract "hundreds of thousands of attendees from many countries, including several disproportionately afflicted by the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic."

"If Covid-19 were detected at these festivals, the scope and number of attendees and the nature of the venue would make it infeasible, if not impossible, to track those who may be placed at risk," Kaiser said.

Festival organizers had not said if they would attempt to find a later date for the 2021 festival.

SOURCE: AFP



Festival goers attend the 2019 Coachella Valley Music And Arts Festival - Weekend 2 on April 21, 2019 in Indio, California. **PHOTO: PRESLEY ANN/ AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vatican Museums to reopen Monday after virus closure

The Vatican Museums, including the Sistine Chapel, said they will reopen on Monday after being closed for 88 days due to coronavirus restrictions -- the longest closure since World War II.

The world-famous collections will open their doors to the public from Monday to Saturday, but visitors must pre-book tickets and will be given timed entry slots.

Curators used the closure, sparked by Italian government measures introduced to stem the spread of Covid-19, to carry out maintenance and refurbishment works.

That included careful dusting of 15th-century frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, which normally attracts six million visitors a year.

"The Pope's Museums await you with pleasure!" a statement said.

SOURCE: AFP

Iran expects first batch of Russian vaccine by Feb 4

Iran's ambassador to Russia said Saturday that Tehran expects to receive the first batch of Moscow's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine by February 4, state news agency IRNA reported.

The news comes just days after Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced the vaccine had been approved by the Islamic republic. "A contract for the purchase and joint production was signed yesterday between Iran and Russia," envoy Kazem Jalali said, quoted by IRNA.

Two more batches are to be delivered by February 18 and 28, he added, without specifying quantities.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei earlier this month banned the use of vaccines made by the United States and Britain, calling them "completely untrustworthy".

Iran is fighting the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of Covid-19 with more than 57,800 dead out of over 1.4 million cases.

SOURCE: AFP

THE DRAFTING BODY

New round of Syrian constitutional talks concludes, UN envoy expresses disappointment

AS the week-long fifth meeting of the Small Body of the Syrian Constitutional Committee concluded here on Friday, a senior UN official expressed his disappointment for the way the meeting is being conducted.

“I told the 45 members of the drafting body that we can’t continue like this, that the week has been a disappointment,” Geir O. Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria, said at a press conference.

He told reporters that the delegates even could not reach an agreement on several important things of the methodology of how to continue the meeting, and the meeting actually started on Monday without an agreed common ground. “I explained that we need the two Co-Chairs to work better together, via me — or they sit down and discuss. And we need to produce then a work plan for how



First session of the fourth round of the Select Committee for amending the Syrian constitution. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE.**

the meetings will be organized in the future,” he said.

He told reporters that for now there is not obviously an agreed time for a new meeting.

The Syrian Constitutional Committee — which comprises representatives of the Syrian government, the opposition, and civil society — was officially launched in Geneva on Oct. 30, 2019.

The Committee’s Small Body, including 45 delegates with 15 each from the three groups, held several sessions since then, without making any major progress.

SOURCE: Xinhua

FOURTH IN EUROPE

Portugal parliament votes to legalize euthanasia

PORTUGAL’S parliament on Friday passed a law allowing medically assisted dying, putting the Catholic-majority country on course to become the fourth in Europe to legalize euthanasia.

Before coming into force the bill must first be signed into law by President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a staunch Catholic and conservative who was re-elected only last weekend.

The president — who has yet to make public his position on the issue — could also either use his veto against the legislation, or refer it to the country’s constitutional court for further study.

The bill was adopted in parliament by 136 votes to 78 with four abstentions — thanks largely



The bill was opposed by the Catholic Church in Portugal. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

to a majority of votes from the ruling Socialist Party which had allowed its MPs to vote freely.

If the president did decide to exercise his veto, a second vote by lawmakers would override it.

Lawmakers had approved proposals aimed at changing the

law in February, setting up the vote despite a campaign by the Church for a national referendum on the issue. Socialist MP Isabel Moreira, a constitutional law expert who helped draft the law, said that it would respect “free choice and every individual’s independence”.

‘Right to choose’

The bill legalises access to assisted suicide for adult patients in a situation of “extreme suffering and irreversible damage”. Several doctors must greenlight the procedure, while a psychiatrist would be called in if there are doubts about the patient’s ability to make a “free and informed” choice.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

POLITICAL CRISIS

Italy’s president allows four days of talks over political crisis

ITALY’S president gave ruling parties more time Friday to form a new government, after the resignation of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte plunged the virus-ravaged country into crisis. Sergio Mattarella said a parliamentary majority could be found based on the members of Conte’s previous coalition and tasked the speaker of the lower house, Robert Fico, to open more detailed negotiations running through Tuesday. The centre-left government has been in turmoil ever since former premier Matteo Renzi withdrew his Italia Viva party earlier this month, a move that forced Conte to step down this week. **SOURCE: AFP**

FILAMENT OF CONCENTRATED MOISTURE

California declares state of emergency over atmospheric river storm

CALIFORNIA Governor Gavin Newsom declared on Friday evening a state of emergency for Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties in California as the most recent spate of atmospheric river storms tore through the area and left chaos and destruction in their wake.

Newsom issued Friday’s emergency proclamation due to storms “that have threatened to cause mud and debris flows, forced the evacuation of thousands of residents and damaged critical infrastructure, including washing out a portion of Highway 1.”

SOURCE: Xinhua

MASS RALLIES

Police tighten security as thousands join Indian farmer protests

INDIAN police tightened security Saturday around camps where farmers have been protesting against new agricultural reform laws, as thousands more arrived to join the campaign. Authorities cut internet links to most of the camps where tens of thousands of farmers have been based since November as they demand the repeal of the laws.

Tensions have been rising since a mass tractor rally on Tuesday turned into a rampage across Delhi where clashes between farmers and security forces left one dead and hundreds injured. At least

10,000 new protesters have arrived since Thursday to bolster the campaign, according to observers. In the camps, many farmers held a one-day fast on Saturday — the 73rd anniversary of the assassination of independence leader Mahatma Gandhi — in a bid to show their tactics are peaceful. But outside, on top of the internet cut, police blocked a main road into the Ghazipur camp on the outskirts of Delhi. Additional security forces were deployed after clashes erupted Friday between farmers and opponents of their campaign.

SOURCE: AFP



At least 10,000 additional protesters have arrived this week to boost numbers inside the camps. **PHOTO: AFP**

GLOBAL IMPACT OF BLM

Black Lives Matter proposed for Nobel Peace Prize

BLACK LIVES MATTER, a movement which became a rallying cry after the killing by US police of an unarmed black man, has been proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize, a Norwegian MP said Saturday.

Founded in the United States in 2013, the movement received an impetus in May after George Floyd died. A white policeman had knelt on Floyd's neck for eight minutes ignoring Floyd's pleas that he couldn't breathe.

The incident fuelled protests in the United States that sped across the world.

"This movement has become one of the strongest global movements for working with racial injustice," Petter Eide, a socialist lawmaker who proposed BLM for the Peace Prize, told AFP.



People walk past a "Black Lives Matter" mural at Union Square on June 12, 2020 in New York City. - Demonstrations are being held across the US following the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, while being arrested in Minneapolis, Minnesota. **PHOTO: ANGELA WEISS / AFP**

"They have also been spread to many many countries, building up... awareness on the importance of fighting racial injustice," he said.

Tens of thousands of people, including MPs and ministers from all countries, former Nobel laureates and distinguished academics, can propose can-

didates for the various Nobel prizes.

The deadline ends on Sunday.

SOURCE: AFP

FILMS OF THE CORONA ERA

Apocalyptic movies shot during pandemic hit Sundance

A virus horror and a last-day-on-Earth comedy -- both entirely devised, shot and edited during the pandemic -- brought an apocalyptic flavour Friday to the Sundance film festival, which has moved online due to Covid.

Speaking after "virtual" world premieres at the influential US indie event, the films' creators described how they funneled their boredom and anxiety into creativity by quickly finding ways to safely film during long lockdowns.

"I had a slightly hysterical episode about one week into the lockdown... I needed to calm down and part of the calming



Olivia Wilde is among the famous faces who pop up for socially-distanced conversations during "How It Ends" -- many shot outside the A-listers' real-life homes. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

down was to try and write," recalled "In The Earth" director Ben Wheatley. The first new pro-

duction to film in the UK after its initial March lockdown, the horror is set in a remote English forest where scientists are conducting mysterious experiments while a virus sweeps through the cities. "It was a weird amount of pressure on us... all the protocols were brand new at that point," said Wheatley. While Covid-19 does not provide the main plot of the movie, it serves as an essential backdrop to the film's events.

Wheatley told an online Q&A that the introduction of social distancing and lockdown had made even newly finished films look like they were "from another age." "You'd sit there and

watch a movie and it has these massive crowd scenes in, or all their concerns were concerns of two years ago," he said.

"I think that horror films especially, but movies in general, should reflect the moment that you're in." Meanwhile, comedy "How It Ends" imagines Los Angeles on the day an asteroid is due to wipe out the planet.

Liza (played by co-director Zoe Lister-Jones) sets out on foot to confront those who have wronged her -- and make a few last-minute apologies of her own -- all en route to a wild, end-of-days party.

SOURCE: AFP

AVIAN FLU

Most poultry farms hit by bird flu have flaws in wildlife control



Most of the poultry farms in Japan hit by avian flu since last year had flaws in preventing access of wildlife to poultry houses, government officials said Saturday. **PHOTO: KYODO**

MOST of the poultry farms in Japan hit by avian flu since last year had flaws in preventing access of wildlife to poultry houses, government officials said Saturday. The farm ministry's inspection of affected chicken farms found that 90 per cent of the surveyed farms had defects in keeping poultry separated from wild birds and other animals such as holes in roofs and walls of chicken houses.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has confirmed an avian flu outbreak at 39 farms so far this season, resulting in culling of about 6.2 million birds, a record number for one season.

The ministry's survey team inspected 30 of the affected farms and discovered flaws in preventive measures at 27

of them. At the remaining three farms, there were cases where poultry houses had no visible defect or damage but showed signs of rodents entering them and potentially infecting chicken feed, the officials said.

At 19 farms, sufficient disinfection measures were not taken by people working there, they said.

As for the extent of the latest outbreak, the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization has said birds infected by the highly pathogenic type of strain confirmed this season tend to survive longer compared with strains found in past outbreaks, causing infections to spread more widely before farm operators can discover first signs of infections.

SOURCE: Kyodo

WARSAW

Thousands rally in Poland for third night over abortion ban

THOUSANDS protested for a third consecutive night in Warsaw and other parts of Poland on Friday after the country's right-wing government implemented a court ruling imposing a near-total ban on abortion.

Protesters have defied coronavirus restrictions and sub-zero temperatures to rally after the controversial judgement was given legal force on Wednesday.

In Warsaw, they waved Polish and gay rainbow flags and brandished the red lightning symbol used by Women's Strike -- the main organisation behind the protests.

"My body, my choice", "The revolution has a uterus" and "You have blood on your hands" read some of the placards at the protest.

Some of the participants also wore green handkerchiefs around their necks -- the symbol of abortion rights activists in Argentina, which legalized abortion last month.

Thousands also took to the streets in Warsaw and other major cities on Wednesday, and on Thursday several protesters were arrested after entering the perimeter of the Constitutional Court, which issued the ruling.

The verdict means that all abortions in Poland are now banned except in cases of rape and incest, or when the mother's life or health are considered to be at risk.

The ruling found that abortions in cases of foetal abnormalities were "incompatible" with the constitution.

SOURCE: AFP

DISRUPTING COMMERCIAL TIES

Taxes and food certificates: UK counts Brexit costs

A tangle of post-Brexit paperwork, duties and taxes is disrupting commercial ties between Britain and the European Union that have often taken years to build, piling extra costs on small firms that can make cross-Channel trade unprofitable.

Changes since the UK's departure from the bloc's single market and customs union on January 1 have made it "commercially and practically impossible for us to continue actually shipping to the EU", laments cheesemaker

Simon Spurrell.

Owner of the Hartington Creamery, which produces crumbly, flavourful Stilton cheese, Spurrell must now include a food health certificate signed by a veterinarian with each order sent to the bloc. Regardless of the package size, one slab of the geographically-protected treat or a whole crate, the cost of the certificate is the same -- £180 (204 euros, \$247).

A big price to pay for the creamery, which previously relied on EU customers for around one-fifth of

online sales.

"We may just have to abandon the EU market completely until both sides come to their senses," said Spurrell, who is now eyeing sales into North America to help fill the gap.

The food certificate, which applies also to meat and fish products, is not the only bitter-tasting financial consequence served up by Brexit -- even though Britain struck a tariff-free trade deal with the EU.

British customers purchasing goods from the EU with a sale price of



Shipping between Britain and the EU through ports like Dover has got more expensive in both directions with new charges and red tape. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

more than £135 (152 euros, \$185) are in some cases having to pay so-called import value-added tax (VAT)

of around 20 percent.

They may have to also pay customs duties and higher courier charges.

The result is that some EU-based companies, mainly small ones, have decided to stop selling products to buyers in Britain.

'Reality of Brexit'

"It certainly isn't a tariff but nevertheless it's going to have an implication for UK customers and make goods from the EU more expensive," said Gary Rycroft, a partner at law firm Joseph A Jones & Co in Lancaster, northern England.

SOURCE: AFP

ABOUT 68.5 BILLION U.S. DOLLARS

China's Hebei records foreign trade growth of 10.2 pct in 2020

NORTH China's Hebei Province saw its foreign trade grow 10.2 per cent year on year to 441.04 billion yuan (about 68.5 billion U.S. dollars) in 2020, local authorities said Friday.

Of the total, the export volume was 252.19 billion yuan, up 6.4 per cent year on year, and the total import volume grew by 15.8 per cent to 188.85 billion yuan, according to a provincial press briefing.

The export of anti-epidemic products saw a major rise last year, with surges in the exports of masks, protective suits and gloves, and pharmaceuticals, said Guan



Aerial photo taken on Aug. 27, 2019 shows cargo ships at a wharf of Wenfeng port in the China (Hebei) Pilot Free Trade Zone Caofeidian area in north China's Hebei Province. PHOTO: XINHUA

Weiren, an official with the customs of the capital city Shijiazhuang.

The province's foreign trade with Australia, the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, and the United States grew by 23.4 percent, 14.1 percent and 24.9 percent year on year, respectively.

GOVERNMENT PLEDGES 'FRESH START'

Germany replaces finance watchdog chief after Wirecard scandal

THE head of German finance watchdog Bafin is stepping down as part of an overhaul triggered by last year's spectacular collapse of payments provider Wirecard, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said Friday. "The Wirecard scandal revealed that the German financial regulator needs a reorgan-

ization to fulfil its supervisory role more effectively," a ministry statement said. Scholz thanked Bafin chief Felix Hufeld for eight years of service and said the revamp would include "a fresh start" at the top of the agency. Digital payments company Wirecard, once a rising star in the fintech

sector, filed for bankruptcy last June after admitting that 1.9 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) was missing from its accounts. The company's former CEO Markus Braun and several other top executives have since been arrested on fraud and money laundering charges.

SOURCE: AFP

Global equities tumble while GameStop surges in frenzied trading

GLOBAL stocks finished an ugly week with another volatile session Friday as the buying frenzy over GameStop and some other equities resumed amid stepped-up scrutiny from

regulators. Major US indices fell about two per cent following similar drops in Europe and Asia, while investors shrugged off some positive developments on coronavirus vaccines.

Analysts said there were factors besides the drama around GameStop influencing the pullback on Friday and earlier in the week.

SOURCE: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (017N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (017N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **31-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S INTER ASIA LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V PRESIDIO VOY. NO. (051W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PRESIDIO VOY. NO. (051W/E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **31-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP/MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY. NO. (688N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY. NO. (688N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **31-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

World-class integrated industrial city being developed in Pathein

By Kyaw Htike Soe

THE Pathein Industrial City (PIC) project is being developed by Ayeyarwaddy Development Public Company Limited in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region. The Pathein Industrial City (PIC) project is being implemented in three phases and is designed to include an international scale industrial zone, a river port, commercial and residential zone.

Upon completion of the project, which is being established on 6,700 acres of land along the Pathein-Ngapudaw Road in Pathein Township, Ayeyawady Region, with an

investment of US\$500 million, it is expected to create over one million job opportunities for local people, according to an official from Ayeyarwaddy Development Public Company Limited. Phase I of the project is being developed as an industrial zone which will cover about 1,200 acres of land, and the construction work has been about 70 per cent finished. The international port is scheduled to be built in the industrial zone project, and it is being developed for a new role in the regional economy.

“The Phase I of the project covers an area of 1,200 acres of land. At present, the entire

1,200 acres on Phase I are nearing completion and the factories are operational. When the entire Phase I is fully operational, it will provide employment opportunities for between 150,000 and 300,000 local people. Once completed, the project will create thousands of jobs for local people in Ayeyawady Region. This project will greatly contribute to the economic growth and employment prospects of the whole region,” said U Kyi Thar Tun, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Ayeyarwaddy Development Public Company Limited. The Pathein Industrial City (PIC) project is located 8 km

from Pathein Port, 7 km from Pathein railway station and 17 km from Pathein Airport.

The project will include garment factories, rice mills, fish processing plants, glass mills, cold storage facilities, plastics factories, fertilizer factories and furniture factories. “Construction of four factories in Phase I of the project has

been finished. The construction of garment factories that can employ 3,000 to 5,000 workers has been completed. Four more factories are expected to be completed before the rainy season. A special garment zone is being built, and about 50 acres for rice production is being researched by China in the project area,” he added.



The Pathein Industrial City (PIC) project is being implemented on 6,700 acres of land in Pathein, with an investment of US\$500 million. PHOTO: PICMYANMAR.COM



Conceptual design of the Patheingyi Industrial City (PIC) project being developed on outskirts of Patheingyi, Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: PICMYANMAR.COM**

Phase I of the project has reportedly been 70 per cent completed, with Chinese, Korean, Japanese and other international companies investing in the zone.

Phase II and Phase III of the project will be the future development of commercial, residential and industrial zone which will cover about 5,500 acres of land. Phase II of the project will include affordable housing projects, hotels, resorts and shopping malls. After Phase I of the project, Phase II will be implemented in 2021, including the low-cost housing projects and shopping malls. The developers were urged to conduct environmental and social impacts of the project with the aim of lessening negative effects and take grievances of local people into consideration. With rapid urbanization of Patheingyi City and an urgent need for extension of urban residential housings on the

west bank of Ngawun River, the Patheingyi Bridge-2 was built by the Ministry of Construction.

The integrated industrial city project is expected to promote infrastructural development and boost tourism in the region. The local government has been attempting to upgrade basic infrastructure projects in the region, pouring the majority of its budget into reconstruction and upgrade of the road networks, to make operational in all seasons. Infrastructural development of a region plays a vital role in helping the country's GDP increase and uplifting the standard of living of local people. Development of infrastructural projects provides economic growth, creates job prospects for local residents and lifts them out of poverty.



Why Data Protection Matters: Know what you share!

HAVE you ever used WhatsApp or Viber? Have you paid with KBZPay or WaveMoney? Do wear a fitness wristband or call taxis using Grab? Have you ever “liked” a Facebook post? Or taken an online quiz on your ideal tourism destination, or that funny personality test that your friend in the USA sent you? If you answered yes to any of these questions you have been sharing your personal information, either online or offline, with private or public entities — including some that you may never have heard of.

Sharing data may bring benefits, and it has often also become necessary for us to do everyday tasks and engage with other people in today's society, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is not without risks. Your personal data reveals a lot about you, your thoughts, and your life, your ID card details, your friends, even where you had lunch today, whether you walked or took a taxi. These data can easily be exploited to harm you, and that is why these data must be strictly protected.

On 28 January, many countries across the world were celebrating Data Privacy Day. Myanmar is not yet one of them.

But today is still a good opportunity for people in Myanmar to stop and ask themselves: Is my personal data safe? What happens to my personal data? Where does it go?

So what is personal data? The International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) provides a definition that “Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person; an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly — in particular by reference to an identification number or to one or more factors specific to their physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural or social identity”.

In the digital space, where vast amounts of personal data are shared and transferred around the globe instantaneously, it is increasingly difficult for people to maintain control of their personal information flow. This is where data protection comes in.

Data protection refers to the various laws, practices, safeguards, and binding rules put in place to protect your personal information and ensure that you remain in control of it. In short, you should be able to decide whether or not you want to share some information, who

has access to it, for how long, for what reason, and be able to modify some of this information, and more. We should also highlight that data protection is different from data security since it extends beyond securing information to devising and implementing policies for its fair use.

Governments also have a security interest in ensuring the protection of personal data. In 2018, it was discovered that the personal details of 1.5 million users of SingHealth's clinics had been hacked, over three years. Hundreds of thousands of credit card details from at least six Southeast Asian countries — including Malaysia and Singapore — have been leaked online, reported by India-based cybersecurity start-up Technisant. These types of attacks are happening more frequently across the globe, and countries must take action to better protect individuals' information.

Many countries have adopted data protection laws to ensure that governments, companies, and anyone else who collects your personal data are legally obliged to collect it only for specific purposes and protect it properly. This includes most of Myanmar's neighbours. For example, Thai-

land adopted a Data Protection Law in 2019, loosely modelled on the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.

However, Myanmar does not yet have a Data Protection Law. This is a problem not only for those who are worried about whether their personal data is safe but also for those who want to trade across borders through e-commerce platforms. As other countries establish laws that protect personal data, they will be less willing to allow trade with those that don't have such laws.

But can't we just trust the government, companies and others to self-regulate and be responsible with our data? Certainly, we can encourage them to act in accordance with the concept of 'Privacy by Design'. That means, for example, not asking for unnecessary personal data or using it for purposes other than the reason it was collected, notifying you if there is a risk, and letting you know how they make your data safe.

And it's true that simply adopting a data protection law won't stop systems being hacked. But laws allow the government to fine organizations whose cybersecurity is lax or restrict the abuse of data. SingHealth had to pay a fine of SGD

1 million. The prospect of significant financial penalties drives companies and other organizations to invest in better cybersecurity and data protection. It's good for business too: at the very least, customer confidence collapses when personal data is leaked, even if there is no financial loss. A data protection law can improve public trust in the digital space, particularly if it is human-centric international digital rights organisation.

Privacy keeps you, your information, and your reputation safe. Once your reputation is compromised, it will be hard to restore. So be careful when you share your personal data with unknown apps and platforms without a privacy policy consent.

Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business has been advocating since 2016 for a Myanmar Data Protection Law that protects the right to privacy in line with international standards. We encourage the new government and parliament to take this step. We believe it will build trust in government, trust in business and keep you safe. Together, we can build strong and concrete safeguards for the right to protection of personal data. — MCRB

MFF 3rd Congress held to focus on football development

THE 3rd MFF Congress 2021 Ceremony of Myanmar Football Federation was held yesterday by Videoconferencing to review and focus on Myanmar football issues plus development.

President of Myanmar Football Federation U Zaw Zaw, Vice-Presidents Dr Sai Sam Tun and U Pyae Phyo Tay Za, General Secretary U Ko Ko Thein, Executive Members, Myanmar National League club authorities, and officials from 242 township football federations attended the meeting.

The ceremony was launched by a welcome address of FIFA President Infantino. The FIFA President gave his best of wishes to all Myanmar football friends and said that he would like to come to Myanmar and celebrate the Myanmar Football Federation Congress together with Myanmar Football Federation officials, but the global

pandemic situation did not allow him to come to Myanmar.

The year 2020 has been a difficult year, but he saw the unity of all his football friends.

He continued that Myanmar is committed to playing football to protect human beings along with the efforts of the football world, including quarantine centres, hospitals, infection control centres, donations and medical supplies.

Next, the programme of the third Myanmar Football Association Conference was announced, and a minute of silence was launched in mourning for the victims of Myanmar football in 2020.

Afterwards, President of Myanmar Football Federation U Zaw Zaw gave a welcome address.

"I would like to thank the President of the FIFA Football Federation Infantino for his wel-



MFF President U Zaw Zaw seen at the videoconferencing event of the 3rd MFF Congress on 30 January 2021. **PHOTO: MFF**

come address at the Myanmar Football Federation Congress," U Zaw Zaw said.

U Zaw Zaw also focused on youth football development and humanitarian works related to

football.

After the speeches, officials introduced new members of the Board of Supervisors and Township Football Representatives to the MFF.

After that, President of Myanmar Football Federation U Zaw Zaw made concluding remarks to close the ceremony.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Zverev remains confident amid personal upheaval

MELBOURNE—US Open finalist Alexander Zverev insisted Saturday he is on track to contend for a maiden Grand Slam title despite a mounting personal toll off the court. The world number seven will spearhead Germany in the ATP Cup starting in Melbourne Tuesday as he eyes a first Slam trophy at the subsequent Australian Open. But Zverev, who

fell agonizingly short in New York to Dominic Thiem, has endured a tumultuous period including allegations of domestic abuse by a former girlfriend and a recent split with coach David Ferrer. The 23-year-old, however, said he remained buoyed by his strong showing in the majors last year, which included a semi-final finish at the Australian Open. —AFP ■

Premier League urge social media firms to clamp down on racist abuse



Manchester United captain Harry Maguire (right) offered his support to team-mates Axel Tuanzebe and Anthony Martial after they were subjected to racist abuse on social media. **PHOTO: AFP/LAURENCE GRIFFITHS**

LONDON—England's Premier League has urged social media organizations to do more to combat racism following online abuse directed at the Manchester United duo of Axel Tuanzebe and Anthony Martial and West Brom's Romaine Sawyers this week. West Brom contacted po-

lice after Sawyers was sent a racist message during Tuesday's 5-0 loss to Manchester City, while the United pair came under attack following a shock defeat by Premier League basement club Sheffield United on Wednesday.

"I am appalled to see the racial abuse received by play-

ers this week," Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said Friday.

"Racist behaviour of any form is unacceptable and nobody should have to deal with it.

"Tackling online hate is a priority for football, and I believe social media companies need to do more."

Masters said while the Premier League had been talking to social media companies, more action was needed to ensure the "swifter removal" of abusive messages.

"We are in regular dialogue with social media companies, challenging them to do more against discriminatory abuse on their platforms," he said.

"We want to see swifter removal of offensive messages and improved identification and banning of offenders."—AFP ■



Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo. **PHOTO: MARCO BERTORELLO AFP/FILE**

Ronaldo does what he wants, Juve coach says

ROME—Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo said Friday it had nothing to do with him if star player Cristiano Ronaldo broke coronavirus rules with a visit to a mountain resort.

"Ronaldo had the day off, he can do what he wants in his private life," Pirlo said, after Italian media reported the striker defied travel restrictions earlier this week.

He added of all the footballers in the Serie A club: "Off the pitch they are free citizens and each one takes his own responsibility."

Ronaldo reportedly travelled to the resort of Courmayeur, 150 kilometres north-west of Juventus' Turin headquarters, for the birthday of his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez.

The Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper said the couple spent Tuesday night in a hotel and took a ride on a snowmobile the next morning, before returning to Turin.

Under current Italian coronavirus rules, the couple should not have left the city of Turin. The multimillionaire player and his partner now risk a fine of up to 400 euros (\$485) each.

Several Italian media outlets reported that local Carabinieri police were looking into the claims about Ronaldo but AFP was unable to confirm this.—AFP ■